United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council imposes two-week deadline for full compliance with ban on flights over Bosnia and Herzegovina; authorizes Member States "to take all necessary measures" to enforce ban in Bosnian airspace; vote is 14 in favour, with China abstaining.

+ Security Council, in Presidential statement on safety and security of United Nations forces and personnel, says attacks and other acts of violence against such personnel are "wholly unacceptable"; demands that all possible steps be taken to ensure their safety and security.

+ Secretary-General sends Personal Envoy to Indonesia and East Timor to report on overall human rights situation in East Timor.

+ United Nations Angola Verification Mission begins operation to help civilian refugees fleeing Huambo to Angola's west coast, where food is being provided by United Nations agencies.

+ Large numbers of ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia are reportedly migrating to Vietnam following massacres earlier this month, according to United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia.

+ Food and Agriculture Organization says world cereal production improves modestly, but acute regional food shortages continue.

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The Security Council today imposed a two-week deadline for full compliance with the ban on flights over Bosnia and Herzegovina and authorized Member States, acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements, "to take all necessary measures" in the Bosnian airspace to enforce the ban on flights.

Acting under the enforcement provisions of the United Nations Charter, the Council adopted resolution 816 (1993) by a vote of 14 in favour, none against and one abstention (China). The Council also decided to extend the already existing ban to cover flights by all fixed-wing and rotary-wing

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aircraft, except for flights authorized by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

Under other provisions of the text, the Council asked Member States concerned, the Secretary-General and UNPROFOR to coordinate closely the measures they are taking to ensure the ban and to report the starting date to the Council through the Secretary-General.

The Council further decided that, if all three Bosnian parties should accept the settlement plan by the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on former Yugoslavia before the deadline, the measure set forth in this resolution would be included in the measures for implementing that settlement.

The Council asked the Member States concerned to inform the Secretary-General immediately of any actions they take to enforce the ban on flights. It also asked the Secretary-General to report regularly on the matter.

In explanation of vote, the representative of China expressed his opposition to the use of force to ensure the ban on flights over Bosnian airspace because it would endanger the UNPROFOR personnel on the ground.

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The Security Council this afternoon urged States and other parties to various conflicts to take all possible steps to ensure the safety and security of United Nations forces and personnel and demanded that States act "promptly and effectively" to deter, prosecute and punish all those responsible for attacks and other acts of violence against such personnel.

The call was contained in a Presidential Statement, read out by Council President Terence O'Brien (New Zealand), following the Council's examination of the Secretary-General's report entitled "An Agenda for Peace" of last June, in which he proposed a number of measures to enhance the United Nations effectiveness with regard to peace and security.

The statement said the Council considered that attacks and other acts of violence, whether actual or threatened, including obstruction or detention of persons, against United Nations forces and personnel were "wholly unacceptable". Such acts might require the Council to take further measures to ensure the safety and security of such forces and personnel.

The Council commended the courage and commitment of those who accept considerable personal risks in order to carry out the mandates of the United Nations as it had found it increasingly necessary to deploy peace-keeping forces and personnel in situations of real danger.

The Council asked the Secretary-General to report as soon as possible on the existing arrangements for the protection of United Nations forces and

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personnel. It also asked him to make such recommendations "as he considers appropriate" for enhancing the safety and security of United Nations forces and personnel.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has decided to send Amos Wako, Attorney-General of Kenya and an international authority on human rights, as his Personal Envoy to Indonesia and East Timor. The visit, which will begin on Friday, 2 April, is a follow-up to a similar visit that he undertook in February of last year.

During his one-week mission, Mr. Wako will examine whether recommendations he made following his first visit have been implemented. He will then report to the Secretary-General on his impression of the overall human rights situation in East Timor. Mr. Wako will be accompanied by two officials of the United Nations Secretariat.

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In cooperation with the Government of Angola, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) today began an operation to help civilian refugees who have fled Huambo in central Angola on foot to the calmer Caimbambo, 250 kilometers east of Huambo.

According to a communiqué issued at Headquarters, the refugees were being taken by helicopter to Benguela and Lobito where humanitarian aid was being provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). A total of 3,000 to 4,000 people, mostly women and children, sick or injured, needed to be transported by UNAVEM II helicopers.

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Large numbers of ethnic Vietnamese are reportedly moving south from Tonle Sap Lake towards Vietnam, according to a report by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) today. Following massacres in the Kompong Chhnang Province, where some 40 Vietnamese boat people were killed earlier this month, as many as 7,000 Vietnamese were seen heading towards the Vietnamese border by boat. That did not include the families who had been moving by land.

According to the spokesman of UNTAC, Eric Falt, UNTAC has been watching the movement of population with considerable concern and has urged the existing administrative structures to take every necessary step to maintain law and order. He said many of the ethnic Vietnamese people had been living in Cambodia for generations and had probably already been registred to vote.

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Despite a modest improvement in world cereal production, acute regional food shortages are continuing and large sections of the world's population

still lack access to food, reports the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

In an opening statement to a meeting of the FAO Committee on World Food Security, which ends tomorrow, FAO Director-General Edouard Saouma said there was "a deep sense of frustration about the present state of world food security". In an increasing number of African countries, he said, civil strife had consequently led to large population movements, followed by the disruption of agricultural activities and food shortages. The food situation was considered grave in Somalia, Sudan, Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, with shortages imminent in Togo, Rwanda and Zaire. Food shortages were also acute in Iraq and Afghanistan, where tight supply had been aggravated by the large influx of refugees.

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